

# The Temptations of a Nine o'Clock Girl

A beautiful girl alone in New York, working in a rich man's candy store.

A man who had made money, but who had never had a chance to play, who had been faithful always to his wife, felt a fatherly interest in her.

What would be the outcome?

Start Reading Here: Henry Marshall, millionaire and staid business man, finds that he has been stopping in a certain candy store just to buy candy from a very good looking clerk. His children, Helen and George, kid him about the girl, who had a reputation for turning away all advances.

"Absurd!" cried Helen scornfully. "Papa isn't that sort, and you know it, George."

"You never can tell," he teased. "Can you, Kitty?"

"I only know what I'm told," she answered, affecting innocence. "I don't suppose Dick was a good authority, but he used to say that men were all alike, only some were more so."

They all laughed at that, for Kitty Despard had a way of conveying more meaning by her manner than by her words.

"Absurd!" cried Helen again, but with less conviction than before. "Papa isn't that sort."

Henry Marshall, meanwhile, knowing where his wife would be at that time of the afternoon, went to the little room at the back of the house that was peculiarly hers.

Ordinarily he did not seek her out when he came home, but as a rule went to the library and smoked till dinner was announced. Today, however, conscious, perhaps, of a wrong done her in his thoughts, he went to her. She looked her surprise at his visit.

"Anything wrong, Henry?" she asked. She was a comely, comfortable-looking matron, who wore her good clothes with an air of ease.

"Kitty Despard is visiting Helen," he answered. "I don't think it is good for Helen to see much of her. A divorced woman isn't exactly the companion for her."

"I don't think they see much of each other, Henry. Besides, what can you do? She's older than Helen, but they've known each other for years. Anyway, it was Dick's fault. He was a beast from what I hear. And Kitty is recognized by everybody." She spoke with the placidity and moderation of one who wishes to be fair.

"She always was over-sophisticated," he said irritably.

"Young girls are sophisticated nowadays," sighed Mrs. Marshall.

"Our Helen is no exception. Girls were not like that in my day."

"All girls are not like it now," he snapped. He was thinking of the girl in the candy store.

"Perhaps not—but do you know, Henry, I think we were happier when we hadn't so much money. It is hard to bring up a family properly when so much time is taken up by social duties."

"Maybe, but we've got to hold

our end up, I suppose, and we have the money. We can't go back to the old ways."

"No," she sighed, "I don't suppose we can."

Probably if Rose Richards could have done so she wouldn't have abated one jot of her beauty, although she had often found it a source of great annoyance to her.

If she had been well equipped to make the struggle in New York, it would have mattered less, but she was not so equipped. A little knowledge of stenography was all she had. She had been born and brought up in a small town, and had a fair education. She had come to New York on the death of her father, which had necessitated her earning not only her living, but something for her mother.

An older sister had preceded her and for a while had done well and had sent some money home. Then her letters had become infrequent and her small remittances dwindled to nothing. Then they had heard nothing from her for a long time. The big city had apparently swallowed her up.

If the mother had been a wise woman she would have let her experience with Ethel be conclusive; but she was not wise, only weak and loving; and when Rose, lured by the glamour of the city, insisted on going there to earn the money necessary, she consented to let her go, weeping copiously and praying that nothing would happen to her. She was too ill to take care of herself, and she had only Rose to look to. Besides, Rose might find Ethel.

So Rose had entered the jungle, and after being hunted by the wild beasts—men—had finally reached the apparently safe haven of the candy store. She had learned how to live and dress well on a very little, to send something every week to her mother, and even to lay by a tiny sum. All of which would seem to argue that she had character even if she lacked equipment for the battle of life in the great city.

When Mr. Marshall left the store with the box of candy, the girl next to her had whispered, "He'd have bought three times as much if you had been nicer to him." There was a world of meaning in the giggle with which she ended her assertion.

"I didn't want to be nice to him."

"It's business. I wish some rich guy like that would get stuck on me. Did you see that limousine of his?"

"He ought to be ashamed of himself," returned Rose. "He has a daughter as old as I am. If he wants candy, let him come on in

With that she dismissed him from her mind, a thing that was the more easily done, in view of the rush of work during the last hours the store remained open.

She was tired when she left for the room she called home. It was not much of a home—just a garret in an old house on the west side of the city, north of 14th Street. It was a perfectly safe and respectable place, and she was permitted to do what the landlady called light housekeeping; and in her determination to save, Rose often made it very light indeed.

Being young, she craved some of the pleasures of life; but being determinedly good and knowing the dangers and difficulties that beset a girl who is at once pretty and

bent on finding her sister, Ethel. Her first feeling had been one of indignation over her sister's selfishness in neither helping her mother nor communicating with her. But, after she had been in the city for a while and had come to know it better, her indignation had given place to dread of what she would find when she found Ethel. Nevertheless, she never ceased to look for her.

She had long since been to the last address Ethel had written, without obtaining the faintest clue to her whereabouts or what she had been doing at that time. Since then, in her study of the faces of the passers-by on the street, she had always, if unconsciously, had Ethel in mind.

Ethel had been as light-hearted, perhaps, too, as light-minded, as she was pretty; consequently it always haunted Rose's imagination that her sister had taken the easiest way and was more than likely to be found, if ever, lolling luxuriously in a limousine.

And this was one of the reasons why she was hardened in her determination to be good—fanatically good.

It came on to rain as she walked homeward—a cold, drizzling rain. She put up the umbrella she had carried in anticipation of this and hurried, thinking no longer of either bright windows or faces. She turned up 26th Street to avoid the traffic of Madison Avenue and was nearing 6th Avenue when she was accosted.

"Rose! Rose!" she heard a husky voice say.

She stopped and turned, a sudden terror gripping her. A bedraggled girl with great, staring eyes came hesitatingly toward her. Rose studied her in a panic. Could this be her sister?

"Don't you know me, Rose? I'm Ethel."

"Ethie! Ethie!" wailed the girl, reverting to her childish name for her sister.

Ethel shrank away. "I only want 10 cents for a cup of coffee, Rose. I won't bother you. I'm most in, or I wouldn't have spoken."

If Rose had found her sister richly clad, riding in a limousine, she might have been as hard and severe as she had imagined herself going to be; but now she was unable to say a word. She reached out and pulled her sister under the umbrella and dragged her frantically along with her until she saw that the other could not maintain the pace, when she slowed up.

"You're going home with me, Ethie," she said.

"No, no!" moaned Ethel; "you won't want to be seen with me."

"You're coming with me," was the response almost harshly made.

Ethel yielded and went on without further opposition, clinging to Rose's arm.

Once Rose found voice to ask, "Am I going too fast?"

What lesson was Rose to learn from this sister, her one-time beloved Ethie?



"Young girls are sophisticated nowadays," sighed Mrs. Marshall

and buy it. There's no need of picking me out so pointedly."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"But you said he had a daughter as old as you."

"He told me that the candy was for his daughter, and that she would like what I would like. Wouldn't you think a respectable-looking man of his age would leave girls alone?"

"It's the old guys that fall hardest."

Rose ended the whispered talk with "Well, he ought to be ashamed."

penniless, she fought down her desires for pleasure and laid by every penny she could.

To take the place of the pleasures that cost money, she took advantage of every possible device for entertainment that cost nothing.

One such device was walking down 5th Avenue when her work was done, looking in at the brilliantly lighted store windows and watching the passers-by. It always left her rather hungry for the things she couldn't have, but it never affected her resolution to be careful.

She had come to New York fully

## LAUGH AND LEARN—

## Just Kidding

## By Kerry Conway

